WHY WAIT FOR SLOWER MAGS???
COMICS NEWS UP TO 3 MONTHS EARLY!

COMIC & CARD PICKS!

Summer Special

VANTAGE™

COMIC & CARD PICKS

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#13

USA $2.95 / Canada $3.99

July 1995

LEATHER LADY DEATH COVER

HOT NEW TALENT SEARCH

★ PLUS ★

"It Won't Be Pretty."

...Retailers speak out on Distributor wars

When its due out and how to get it!

- Our "Alpha" Mishap
- Nuns with Swords
- Marvel Publicity Gets Gutted!

07>

0 74470 84190 6

ICE AGE™

The fire sings, the glaciers call, the Ice Age comes.

MAGIC The Gathering™

***Ice Age*™ is designed to be played by itself, or as a standard expansion for *Magic: The Gathering*™.**

Wizards OF THE COAST

Ice Age and *Magic: the Gathering* are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
Wizards of the Coast is a registered trademark. Illustration by Rob Alexander, ©1995.

A celebration began this past August when a new generation in the comic book industry shed the name Continüm and emerged as August House, Inc.
Our flagship title is

THE DARK

This immortal warrior will come your way, in the midst of night, in full color every five weeks.

AUGUST HOUSE

FOODANG

Our second title is the touching story of a circus clown who becomes a superhero, fights some crazy aliens, hooks up with a telepathic runway model, and wrecks a lot of expensive real estate.
AN IMMORTAL WARRIOR AND A CLOWN WITH A GUN INVITE YOU TO THEIR HOUSE...

AUGUST HOUSE, Inc.

THE DARK, AUGUST HOUSE © & ™ 1994 Joseph Naftali.
FOODANG © & ™ 1994 Michael Duggan.
All Rights Reserved.

VANTAGE™ COMIC & CARD PICKS

number thirteen

contents

section

Vantage Picks & News 1
Lawsuits, exclusive deals, and the internet. Also comics preserved in leather!

Non-Sports Picks 2
Our card carrying correspondent reviews more picks.

Comics Are For Reading First 3
Keller heats up with Solar then turns out the lights for Midnite's Quickies.

Game Picks 4
Star Wars card game could be hot! Towers in Time pushed back to "summer."

Toy Picks 5
Naked Spawn figure!! Just kidding. But there should be several variations in the series 2 figures, and one will be naked! A mom's dream.

Making An Impact 6
Vantage talks with Double Impact's Ricky Carralero about China and all that Jazz.

staff

Publisher and Editor	Rob Golub
Associate Editor	Steve Asvitt
Art Director	Michael Munshaw
Assistant Art Director	Arcadia Design
Non-Sports Expert	Rembert Parker
Columnist	Corey Bond
Reading Picks	Rich Keller
Publisher's Assistant	Brian Petersen
Toy Picks	Gregg Keefer

Special thanks to our advisors!

Vantage Comic & Card Picks
Volume One, Number 13,
July 1995.

Office of Publication: Vantage-Golub Communications, Inc., 13000 W. Blue Mound Road, Suite #110, Elm Grove, WI 53122.

Entire contents copyright © 1995 by Vantage-Golub Communications, Inc. **Vantage** is an imprint of Vantage-Golub Communications. All artwork © respective publishers and owners. All rights reserved. The **Vantage** and **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** logos are protected through the trademark laws of the United States of America and may not be reprinted without permission.

Phone: 414-797-8221. Fax: 414-797-7960. America Online: RobVantage. Internet: RobVantage@aol.com (this gets you Rob Golub, you lucky dog). One year subscription (12 monthly issues): $34.95. One year subscription to the market guide only (12 monthly issues): $49.50 (roster limited). We welcome submissions (articles), comments, new advisors, press releases, product ideas, and free money. Write or call. We don't bite. Call or write for advertising rates. Limitations may apply. Mission: To provide comic retailers, dealers, and mature collectors with information, logical analysis, and entertainment not generally available to the public.

Cover: Artwork™ & © 1995 High Impact

TOP PICKS OF THE MONTH

Lady Death in Lingerie #1, Leather Cover Variant (Chaos / Leather cover)

Oblivion #1-up (Comico / Big names on covers, good story)

Tomoe #1 (Crusade / Surprise variant edition of **Shi** #6)

MORE VANTAGE PICKS

Bloodfire / Hellina #1, both versions (Lightning Comics, Deodato and Trent Kaniuga)

Dark Horse Presents #100 - #1-5 (Dark Horse / Anniversary issues)

Double Impact #1-up (High Impact / Female, variant on #2)

Lady Rawhide #1-up (Topps Comics / Female hit)

Nightwing #1-up (DC / Popular character's own title)

Ninja High School #34 (Antarctic Press / Prelude to Warrior Nun, but not a 1st appearance)

Shi #4 (Crusade / First appearance of Tomoe)

Shi - Senryaku #1-up (Crusade / Sourcebook-style with new twist, big artists)

Star Wars Collectibles, all (Various / See article)

Star Wars: X-Wing — Rogue Squadron #1-up (Dark Horse / Ongoing Star Wars, hot)

Visitor #13 (Acclaim / Valiant / Visitor's Identity, underplayed)

Warrior Nun Areala #1-up (Antarctic Press / Adventure group / A nun with a sword, heating up fast)

Warrior Nun Areala: Book Two #1-up (Antarctic Press / Adventure group/ A nun with a sword, heating up fast)

Zealot #1-up (Image / WildStorm / Female from Gen 13 crowd)

WATCH FOR THE VANTAGE STAR INDICATING OUR TOP PICKS!

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read!"

- Publisher Rob Golub

IT'S GOING TO BE A MURPHY'S SUMMER

Cool, man, it's summer.

But it's gonna be one weird summer. Next month, we'll be talking to you about how Marvel's exclusivity will affect the back-issue market and comics in general. Then, later in the summer the topic will become how DC 's moves will affect the market.

Still promised, but not yet released, is the answer to the question, "Who Capital will be going exclusive with?" Insiders are holding their breath, hoping for the best.

Add the fact that major publishers have been laying off key people, and you start to see it, don't you? It's time to apply Murphy's Law ... the guiding principle for the summer of 1995. Sure, comic publishing and distribution is still being run by the best and the brightest, but where big, sudden changes are made, you can be sure there'll be some big, sudden mistakes.

A Murphy's summer could include low print runs on some important books, shortages of books in some parts of the nation, or anything else you can think of. We'll be watching closely, to keep you as informed as possible.

Rob Golub
-Publisher

#6 HAS INSANE VARIANT COVER

Shi™ & © 1995 William Elliott Tucci

Shi #6 has a variant cover that makes the comic appear to be a first issue. Instead of having a cover that says **Shi** #6, half of the **Shi** #6s will actually have covers that say **Tomoe** #1. The **Tomoe** #1 and **Shi** #6 covers will be completely different but the interiors will be exactly the same.

Obviously, a new #1 from Tucci should have strong market reaction. Whether Tomoe will eventually get her own ongoing series remains to be seen. "Can't say," Tucci told **Vantage** with a smile.

Tucci insists that Tomoe will be "a very major character," someone who was a friend of Shi's in college. Tomoe is a character that would have all the ruthlessness of Shi if she were to give in to her warrior nature.

Vengeance of Vampirella artist Buzz assisted with pencils on **Shi** #6, with Tucci doing the rest of the pencils. Bill Tucci and Buzz met at a store signing in New York a year ago. Over the next few months, the two became fast friends. When Tucci needed some help with the art chores on issue #6, and to enable him to keep to a publishing schedule, he called on friend Buzz, who agreed to help pencil issue #6 for Tucci.

Tucci himself is more than happy to have the help, "Buzz has become a fan favorite for his stunning work on Vampirella. His vision of the female form coupled with his delicate line work made him a natural choice to help me get this book out quicker," Tucci explained.

"Billy creates such great characters," Buzz explained, "and [Tomoe] has the potential to become as popular as Shi herself. This is going to be a very important issue in the Shi continuity and I'm honored that Billy wants me to be a part of it."

Shi #6 should be out as you read this. Tomoe's first appearance was in **Shi** #4.

Correction

Vantage incorrectly said that Crusade started out as a "family-run" business last issue. Crusade was started by Bill Tucci who continues to own and operate the company. **Vantage** regrets the error.

Jimmy Palmatti and Bill Tucci oogle at a copy of Vantage

Lady Death™ & © 1995 Brian Pulido

LADY DEATH COVER WILL BE ALL-LEATHER!

One out of every 50 **Lady Death In Lingerie** #1s, due out in August, will have an all-leather cover, **Vantage** has learned.

While there has been no public announcement regarding **Lady Death In Lingerie** #1, retailers who order it are in for a surprise. When they open up their boxes they'll find that for every 50 copies they ordered they've got a copy with a genuine all-leather cover.

What can **Vantage** say? It's brilliant. We expect the all-leather cover to be as big a hit as the velvet cover was, or bigger. Retailers should consider increasing their orders to some increment of 50.

Fans can get this genuine leather-covered comic in one of several different ways. First,

> What can Vantage say? It's brilliant.

One out of every 50 Lady Death In Lingerie #1s will have an all-leather cover, Vantage has learned.

employees actually put the leather-covered book on the shelf the day it comes out.

Or, there's always this scenario. Go to a retailer who is foolish enough to not carry or read **Vantage** (yes, they do exist). Say to this poor, unsuspecting individual, "Hello sir. I know how you can get a genuine leather-covered Lady Death comic. If I tell you how, can you promise to order me one at cost?" When he says yes, tell him what you know and have him order you 50 books at cost. In the end he'll come out ahead too, because he'll order more for the store.

And then there's always the get-hit scenario. You could run out in front of Brian Pulido's car, and then when you get hit just ask him for some leather covers to make up for your injuries. Surely he'd go for that.

While **Vantage** is under the impression that the leather cover will definitely take place, **Vantage** must emphasize that this is the wacky world of comics and anything can happen.

you can tell your local retailer what's happening and offer to order 50 books in advance. That's the expensive way. Second, you can tell your local retailer what's happening and offer to buy the leather-covered book in advance at a price less than what you'd pay for the 50 books. Let him keep the fifty books. Third, you can try to find a comic shop that's run by a buffoon, where drooling idiot

Lady Death™ & © 1995 Brian Pulido

Married To Vantage!

"Vantage gives me an advantage with my customers. It's excellent."
- Jan Sapp, Comic Chest, Virginia Beach, VA

"I read Vantage but I don't read Wizard™"
- Donald A. Sapp, Comic Chest, Virginia Beach, VA

VANTAGE COMIC & CARD PICKS

Wizard is a ™ of Wizard Press

STAR WARS MOVIE ON THE WAY
EXPECTED TO HEAT UP TREMENDOUSLY

A fourth Star Wars movie will very likely be released within three years, **Vantage** has learned.

Though we have no confirmation direct from Star Wars people, it has become apparent in recent months that major corporations are acting on the assumption that a Star Wars movie is coming.

Milton Griepp, co-owner of Capital City Distribution, spoke of the coming Star Wars movie as a forgone conclusion in his State of the Industry address (see Capital article) and Lou Bank of Dark Horse Comics has publicly acknowledged the coming Star Wars movie. A Topps spokesman called Star Wars the license for "the rest of the decade and beyond. It continues to heat up."

Other sources closer to the actual production of the movie have also indicated it will eventually be released.

Star Wars has endured beyond whatever George Lucas could have dreamed of. The old Star Wars toys aren't just hot components of the toys market, they are the *centerpiece* of the sci-fi toys market. The comics from Dark Horse are wildly hot, and the novels just keep on coming. It reminds us of Star Trek.

And just like when Paramount first started making Star Trek movies, look for the reintroduction of Star Wars to balloon the huge interest that's already out there. The movie should explode the collectors market and sales of Star Wars items to fans. In fact, the build up of anticipation for the coming movie is already helping interest to grow. **Vantage** expects Star Wars fandom to only grow as the movie looms closer.

Star Wars is truly the "Gone With The Wind" of science fiction, and dealers will need to be ready for its increasing importance to fans. Even flea market dealers may want to consider stocking up on the sorts of items they never considered — books, T-shirts, posters, toys, and other items that should sell quickly. In fact, if you think about it, what a fantastic deal — fan items that are already hot now and will only get hotter tomorrow! What more could a dealer ask for?

The collectibles to really watch are the original Star Wars toys, the early issues of the Marvel Star Wars comic book, the high-end Dark Horse Star Wars comics, and other original Star Wars items. The new Dark Horse Star Wars ongoing series should also do very well.

So, for dealers who have been waiting to jump on to the Star Wars bandwagon, now may be the time. For fans, the highest quality Star Wars products in history will now be coming out to take advantage of the movie — **Vantage** suggests you take advantage of the products.

STAR WARS UNLIMITED SERIES

Star Wars is hot, there's no doubt about it. When we first heard that Dark Horse was starting a new regular series, the first thing we thought was, "You mean they don't already have one?"

Dave Dorman paints a fantastic cover, and his cover for this new first issue should be no exception. This is a book that should be a great read (Mike Baron writing!), with real long-term appeal and nowhere to go but up.

The only thing that bugs us is the title. Could it be any longer? **Star Wars: X-Wing — Rogue Squadron #1**. Even longer than **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** — our record is broken!

In any case, the premise of this series is that an X-Wing pilot, having survived the battle against two Death Stars, heads a rescue and retrieval mission as leader of Rogue Squadron. In the midst of the rescue he finds something he never expected, a culture that hates both the Empire and the Alliance! In this series, you get to see X-Wing space jockeys push the front lines back as they battle against the Empire's Tie Fighters. They're taking the galaxy back one planet at a time.

Vantage smells a hit.

Warrior Nun Areala™ & © 1995 Antartic Press

WARRIOR NUN IS HEATING UP

Here's a wild one ... a nun with a sword who battles evil. No kidding, and it's heating up quickly.

What if the world's religions had super-heroes fighting for them? With this concept, the warrior nun was born. She defends the Vatican from Hell itself. With the help of Magic Priests, the Warrior Nuns are each assigned a different sector of the Earth. Areala is assigned New York City. Pretty radical, eh?

Creator-artist Ben Dunn tries to soften the blow in a first-issue message to fans, "For those of you that might have found the title a little confrontational, my apologies. It was not my intention to insult any particular religion, but to create a fantasy story that offered action and adventure as its mainstay."

This is not a title for the religiously queasy. But for its fans that's part of the appeal.

One warrior nun hacks away

This is not a title for the religiously queasy.

at an enemy with her sword while muttering, "forgive them, father." In fact, the book at times strays just a bit too much from realism for us. Areala is recognized in battle and replies, "Cool ... I'm famous."

For those of you who will be offended by this sort of thing, and *there are* those of you who would be offended, we suggest you stay away. For the rest of you, its overall a darn good book — strong art, strong story, and a strong merging of the two. Ben Dunn is apparently one of those special good artists who can write well too.

Fans have responded strongly to Warrior Nun Areala. The first issue (and first appearance) pulled in orders for 40,000 in 1994, a real strong showing for an Antarctic book. Warrior Nun Areala fell to the expected 28,000, but #3 has come in at an unexpected 32,000. Antarctic CEO Joe Dunn was "very surprised by the orders for number three." He added, "We were thinking 20,000."

There was actually a betting pool in the Antarctic office over how orders for #3 would come in. Most bet far below the 32,000 figure. With this mini over, another mini picks up in August — Warrior Nun Areala: Book Two. Miniseries "force you into better storytelling and better construction," said Antarctic Editor-in-Chief Herb Mallette.

This title, more mainstream than most other Antarctic titles, has been heating up quickly. Look for demand to grow for this one at the shows.

OBLIVION™

It's reminiscent of those great Kirby and Lee Fantastic Four books. Okay, we admit it. As far as top picks go this one's just a bit more of a long shot. But it's one deserving of the publicity.

Oblivion is not a "bad girl" book and it's not from a giant publisher. Nonetheless, insiders know Comico to be one of the most aggressive independent publishers in comics.

Working on the Comico universe relaunch are such greats as Art Adams, Geof Darrow, Buzz, Alan Davis, Tony Daniel, and Dave Gibbons. Now of course, the bigger the name, the more likely you'll see the art on covers but not interiors. Still, there ain't nothing wrong with an Art Adams cover.

The Oblivion six issue mini kicks off the Comico launch. The first issue comes with an Art Adams cover. **Vantage** has read the first three issues and the story is pretty good. A potential sleeper.

Batman™ & © 1995 DC Comics

DC AND DIAMOND GO EXCLUSIVE!

CAPITAL FILES LAWSUIT IN RESPONSE!

DC Comics and Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc. have reached an agreement making Diamond an exclusive agent for DC sales to comic shops, according to a joint DC/Diamond statement.

Just a few hours after the fax announcing the DC/Diamond deal came into the **Vantage** office on Friday, April 28, it was followed by a Capital City fax announcing a lawsuit against Diamond. The suit was filed in US District Court seeking to prevent DC Comics from terminating its "dealership agreement" with Capital.

Days later, Capital City announced that it was joining DC to the lawsuit, so that Capital was suing both DC and Diamond. Although the suit against Diamond continues, the suit against DC has since been settled (see Capital City Settles).

The DC/Diamond Deal

Under Diamond and DC's new "sales representation agreement," Diamond is to remain 100% independently owned and operated, said the joint statement. Diamond is to handle all distribution functions for DC products that relate to comic book specialty retailers: soliciting orders, processing orders, physically pulling, packing and shipping orders, invoicing, extending credit, and collecting.

Diamond will no longer purchase product from DC for resale, said the statement. Instead, the transaction is to be between DC and the retailers, with DC setting its own prices and terms of sale, and Diamond acting as DC's sales representative for such transactions.

The DC/Diamond statement promises that "other suppliers will be assured access to comic book specialty shops. No supplier's products will be dropped by Diamond as a result of this agreement."

"We regret ending our longstanding relationships with other distributors who have con-

Logos™ & © 1995 DC Comics and Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc.

tributed to the growth of our industry," said DC Executive Vice President and Publisher Paul Levitz.

Capital's Suit Against DC and Diamond

Apparently, regrets alone just didn't cut it with Capital. The company filed a suit against DC Comics under the auspices of the Wisconsin Fair Dealership Law. This little-known law is designed to protect dealers who work to grow and promote a product line — only to get cut out by the supplier. The law can make it difficult (perhaps impossible) for suppliers to cancel such a relationship, regardless of what is in writing between the two parties. The Wisconsin Fair Dealership Law was also the basis for Capital's suit against Marvel, which was also settled out of court.

Capital added Diamond to the lawsuit, "because of the role it played in obtaining an exclusive arrangement with DC Comics ... in violation of Capital's rights under the Wisconsin Fair Dealership Law."

"Retailers are telling us they want us to be their full-line distributor," said Milton Griepp, president of Capital. "This kind of action, especially the short notice, only makes it difficult for retailers, many of which are small businesses, to conduct their business in a manner that makes good economic and financial sense. We are fighting not only for ourselves, but for all of our retailers as well. In addition, we don't think it's right that we've helped DC at significant expense to our company to build a tremendous market for their products which DC now wants to take from us."

Fandom Is Left With Questions, Not Answers

As we go to press, **Vantage** has many questions but few answers. For example, will rumors of other publishers announcing exclusives soon after DC now come true?

Aquaman Artwork™ & © 1995 DC Comics

CAPITAL SPEECH ON STATE OF INDUSTRY

DC IS "CALLOUS," CAPITAL TO ANNOUNCE EXCLUSIVES

Capital City Distribution co-owner Milton Griepp delivered an upbeat "state of the industry" address at the Capital City trade show in early May, just days after the DC/Diamond announcement.

Griepp was critical of DC's decision to go exclusive with Diamond, calling DC's move "callous" and "destructive." Griepp was calm and measured, "Especially given the timing it will only hurt DC's sales." In a public statement to DC Publisher Paul Levitz he added, "Shame on you Paul ... I think we all deserve better." DC has since agreed to delay its exclusivity with Diamond (see Capital City Settles With DC).

He said that Capital would likely have exclusive announcements of its own to make "in the next couple of weeks." And, "in an exclusive world all stores will need to deal with Capital."

Standing before an audience of 1000 retailers he said, "We want to be your everything else distributor. That's where the growth is — that's where the future is." The audience broke out into applause when Griepp boomed: "Our overall goal is to make this as easy a transition as possible for our retailers." Griepp also said that he was considering listing all comics in **Advance Comics,** so that consumers would not have to buy three catalogs to learn what's happening in comics.

Griepp said that Capital's "number one corporate attribute is the ability to adapt." Griepp went on to argue that Marvel and DC were "the dinosaurs of the old world," pointing out that Marvel and DC's market share had dropped in recent years. Griepp showed the audience a graph indicating that DC's market share once hovered around 30% but now generally sits at below 20%, and another that showed Marvel had once hovered around 50% and that it now was more often closer to 30%.

At the same time, noted Griepp, smaller publisher market share has been gaining. Examples of small publisher growth-companies that he referred to included Antarctic, Chaos, Harris, Topps, Fantagraphics, Kitchen Sink, and Viz. He also noted the growing importance of Star Wars, card games, non-sports, and so forth. "This is a growing part of the market," he said.

Griepp said that Marvel is building an "entertainment company," and that "other parts of their business are expanding so I think they're willing to take more risks with comics."

Capital City Co-Owner Milton Griepp

CAPITAL CITY SETTLES WITH DC COMICS

CAPITAL WILL CARRY JULY AND AUGUST DC COMICS

In a joint statement, Paul Levitz, executive vice-president and publisher of DC Comics, and Milton Griepp, president of Capital City Distribution, announced that an agreement in principle had been reached regarding Capital's lawsuit against DC Comics.

Terms of the agreement are confidential, but it did state that Capital would continue to have the right to distribute DC Comics through August shipping.

"Beginning with September shipping Capital no longer will carry DC Comics," Griepp said. "We're glad to resolve this lawsuit so quickly, and we're particularly happy to resolve it in a way that makes the transition easier for the retailers we serve."

Levitz added, "We appreciate Capital's effort on our behalf over the years and are pleased to be resolving this dispute amicably and moving forward."

Logo™ & © 1995 Capital City Distrubution

SEVEN RETAILERS SPEAK OUT

RETAILERS	HOW I THINK DISTRIBUTOR EXCLUSIVES WILL AFFECT THE COMICS BUSINESS	CHANGES I WILL MAKE IN MY BUSINESS BECAUSE OF DISTRIBUTOR EXCLUSIVES	HOW I THINK DISTRIBUTOR EXCLUSIVES WILL AFFECT COMIC FANS
Steve Ginsberg Claude's Comics Hatboro, PA	A contraction of the customer base and an increase in stores diversifying	Generally won't do reorders, even faster sell-through*	Create confusion and anxiety and ultimately a loss of customer base
Tyler Cauiness Caveman Comics & Cards Springfield, MO	It will only hurt the consumer	I will have to order from others	It won't be pretty
Bill Sommers Big Kid's Comics Tucson, AZ	Retailers will close due to complications	Move to Diamond, Heroes World, and Capital	Limited
Sherry Hanry Titan Games & Comics Atlanta, GA	It will create new opportunities for distributors and stimulate creation of new products	I'll order from three distributors	Minimal affect
Bill Evoy Paperback Trader and Comic West Hartford, CT	The retailer and customer will be giving DC/Diamond and Marvel a big fat RAISE	Order less from companies who tell me how to buy comics and run my business	50% don't care — the others will look for favors and deals
David Lytle Lytle's Comics & Games Bryan, TX	It will make ordering a full line of comics much harder	I will still attempt to carry a full line of comics but will try to start shifting my focus to games and other items	I don't believe it will affect the fan that much unless stores stop carrying a full line. Discounts will probably be used less.
Dan Szpanelewski Fantasy in Comics Warren, MI	It will make ordering for the customer more difficult, as well as for the retailer, being there will be so many order books to look through	My shop is a 90% comic shop but with it having to order from so many places I might try diversifying into other things	I don't think it will change fan feelings; this in an internal thing for retailers.

* (Sell-through is when a retailer sells a comic that he bought from a distributor. Reorders are orders placed after the advance-order deadline. —Rob)

Azreal and Batman™ & © 1995 DC Comics

WHICH BOY SHOULD I KISS?

One odd development that **Vantage** did not foresee is that some retailers seem, well, flattered. Like a girl who several different boys are after, some retailers are sitting back and enjoying the show. Many retailers smile sneakily as they talk about the fact that various distributors and publishers are fighting for their attention. However, the smiles may soon be replaced by frowns. There's no telling what's going to happen next, but as one of the the retailers above put it, it might not be pretty.

DIAMOND AND DC ANSWER THE BIG SIX QUESTIONS

Diamond will be DC's "exclusive sales agent." How is this different from the old way of doing things?

Paul Levitz, *DC Comics Executive Vice President and Publisher:* As our exclusive sales agent, Diamond will continue to handle traditional distribution functions: soliciting orders; order processing; physically pulling, packing and shipping orders; invoicing; credit and collections. However, Diamond will no longer actually purchase product from DC for resale. Instead, the actual transaction will be between DC and the retailers. We'll set our own prices and terms of sale, and Diamond will act as our exclusive sales representative in the transactions.

Steve Geppi, *Diamond Comic Distributors President and CEO:* One very important thing that doesn't change is that Diamond remains an independent company, wholly owned, operated, and controlled by me. We'll continue to run our business according to the needs of our customers, while offering products from the widest possible range of suppliers.

Will Diamond continue to carry products from suppliers other than DC?

Bill Schanes, *Diamond Vice President of Purchasing:* Absolutely! While others may think retailers and consumers have too many choices, we at Diamond are committed to maintaining open access for all quality products from all quality suppliers. We have no intention of changing the criteria we use to evalu-

Death™ & © 1995 DC Comics

ate suppliers. If a product is of professional quality and has commercial appeal, we'll let retailers decide if they want to offer it to consumers in their stores. We believe diversity is a strength, and we'll always strive to treat all our suppliers fairly. In short, we see ourselves as a big tent, with room underneath for everyone.

Why did DC and Diamond do this?

Levitz: In our view, Marvel's new distribution plan can limit choices for retailers and fans, and access to comic book specialty shops for creators. That's why we set out to find the best alternative, one which would ensure that DC comics are reliably and efficiently distributed while preserving the healthy diversity of our industry. Our search led us to the unique relationship we have established with Diamond, a strong company which has competed on a level playing field over the years and emerged as our industry's leading distributor.

Geppi: When DC came to the conclusion that exclusivity with an established distributor was their best option for answering the recent changes in our industry, Diamond was very much interested in providing that service, provided we could maintain the independence which has enabled us to serve our customers and all our suppliers well over the years. By gaining DC exclusivity while maintaining our independence, we've put ourselves in a position to become an even better company, with even more to offer retailers and suppliers alike. DC has long been an ally of our entire industry, and in putting this deal together, they've once again demonstrated a willingness to look beyond just their own self-interest. Our two companies have always worked well together, and that gives us an excellent foundation to build on for the future.

Will Diamond be offering other suppliers exclusively in the future?

Chuck Parker, *Diamond Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer:* To be quite honest, that remains to be seen. When Marvel moved into distribution, we started talks with our other suppliers about how to best work together in the future, and those talks are still ongoing.

Can Diamond really handle this many new stores so quickly?

Cindy Fournier, *Diamond Vice President of Operations:* Yes. We're already dealing with a majority of the retail base, and we have the best distribution systems and infrastructure in the business. What's more, we have a history of successful expansion, so we know how to service many new customers quickly.

What about countries or areas where Diamond doesn't currently have a distribution center?

Fournier: Our plan is to continue to sell to sub-distributors outside the U.S. & Canada, or directly to retailers in these other countries if individual retailers so desire. For areas in the U.S. and Canada where we don't have a Distribution Center, our goal, again, will be to ship new releases so they arrive to every retailer at approximately the same time.

WHERE DO I GET MY BOOKS? RETAILERS ARE IN THE MIDDLE

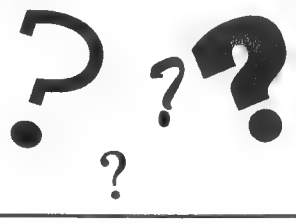
With Capital and DC/Diamond having given retailers contradictory instructions, retailers' brains hurt for about a week last month as they tried to figure out what to do.

At the Capital City trade show in early May, the company indicated it intended to accept and fulfill May orders even though DC and Diamond have announced an exclusive agreement beginning with May orders.

"We are currently continuing to accept DC orders," said Capital co-owner Milton Griepp. Meanwhile, Diamond had been rushing to sign up retailers, saying that they would be the only source for May DC orders. A week later, DC and Capital finally mutually agreed that Capital would handle DC books until August. For a week though, Capital customers had no idea where they'd be getting their DC Comics.

Meanwhile, with Andromeda Distribution out of business, some Canadian retailers are experiencing severe problems. Their advance-orders from the last few months are not being filled by Andromeda, of course, and so they have turned to other distributors. While other distributors will have no problem filling new advance-orders, these distributors are sometimes having difficulty filling reorders for books for which the deadline has already passed.

Thus, some Canadian retailers have just not been getting the books they need.



LADY RAWHIDE GETS A HELPING HAND

Lady Rawhide™ & © 1995 Zorro Productions, Inc.

In a century of comic book history, there have been only five publications that have had the power to seriously help create an after-market phenomenon (even when they don't mean to): **Wizard™**, **Vantage,** Kingpin Comics newsletter, **CVM**, and **Overstreet**. Want some examples?

Wizard did it with Lady Rawhide and Image, **Vantage** did it for Shi and Creed, and the Kingpin Comics investment newsletter did it for Valiant. **Overstreet** was able to do it when they were the only game in town. **CVM's** word was law in the Northeast until **Wizard™** came along. Are there other mags out there? Sure, but they don't affect the after-market.

Anyone who doubts the idea that coverage can create after-market response should take a look at the demand for Lady Rawhide. Comics based on characters from other mediums rarely do well in the after-market — this is a character based on Zorro. And while **Vantage** is not worldly enough to know how cowgirls play in every part of the nation, we do know they're not New York's cup of tea.

So with a limited market and with history shaking its head "no," **Lady Rawhide** is doing nicely for Topps. Maybe not quite as nicely as their **X-Files** blockbuster, but nicely nonetheless. And it's all thanks to **Wizard™** placing Lady Rawhide's first appearance on their top ten list repeatedly, as retailers across the country sat at the counter dumbfoundedly saying, "Lady Rawhide?"

Thanks to the push, **Lady Rawhide** #1-up will be hot. And since somebody over at **Wizard™** just thinks Lady Rawhide is the coolest thing since Todd McFarlane named Spawn's street name after his college roommate, **Vantage** would not be surprised to see additional "top ten list" coverage leading to more heat for **Lady Rawhide** #1.

WANTED:

The Top 25 Most Up-And-Coming Creators In Comics

Vantage has embarked on a nationwide search for the top twenty-five most up-and-coming creators in comics! We'll print our list in **Vantage** #15 for all the world to see!

If you have a favorite artist or writer who you would like to see considered for our top 25 list, please send photocopied samples to **Vantage** Up-And-Comers, 13000 W. Blue Mound Rd., Suite #110, Elm Grove, WI 53227.

Publishers who would like to bring artists and writers to our attention are invited to contact us as well! Thanks for your help and good luck to all!

The Great Dalmuti™ & © 1995 Wizards of the Coast

THE GREAT DALMUTI IS OUT

CAN WIZARDS DO IT AGAIN?

How could George Lucas ever top Star Wars? How could Marvel ever top Spider-Man or X-Men? How could any new science fiction series make it bigger than Star Trek?

This is the kind of problem that Richard Garfield and Wizards of the Coast now face. This monster of a company with its 100+ employees, mega-distribution into mall bookstores, and sales that have put TSR to shame, was started out of a basement while Bill Clinton was running for president. Talk about growth.

And it's all thanks to Magic: The Gathering, which was invented by Richard Garfield. This little card game doesn't just sell out at your local mall bookstore, it sits in the most premier spots — on the counter, or behind the checkout. And during a downward trend in the comic market, Magic kept many comic shops afloat.

But all good things come to an end, and while Magic: The Gathering will likely always have a strong following, the initial excitement simply cannot last. Just as with Dungeons and Dragons, the comic speculator market, and the sports card market, no one item in fandom has ever been able to remain on fire for very long. Magic will eventually even out, and Wizards of the Coast no doubt knows that.

Thus, The Great Dalmuti is not just a card game. It is likely Wizards' attempt to prove to themselves and to fandom that they are not a one-trick pony. And The Great Dalmuti just might do it.

The Great Dalmuti is not just another version of Magic. It's different. In contrast to the complicated Jyhad/Vampire game, The Great Dalmuti is actually simpler than Magic. Instead of various symbols and numbers on each card, the cards all resemble regular playing cards with just one number on each card. The pictures — and this will turn off some Magic fans — are not fantasy-style pictures, but are storybook-style pictures that aren't really the sorts of art pieces than fantasy fans usually go for.

But that's the whole idea.

The Great Dalmuti is a "family card game," says Garfield, "with the simplicity of Uno and the beauty of Magic." Well, perhaps not the beauty of Magic, but you get the idea. Wizards of the Coast is going after mom, dad, and the kids.

In other words, the game looks like fun and the package is attractive, but collectible? Well ... ahh, how can we say this nicely ... well ... no.

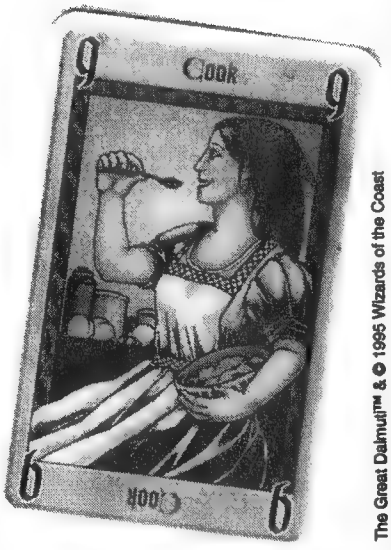
The game will appeal to fandom in other ways though — it relies heavily on medieval class structure, perfect for the power-hungry male comic-heads

perfect for the power-hungry male comic-heads

"With the simplicity of Uno® and the beauty of Magic"

that make up much of fandom (and much of the **Vantage** staff). The more cards you get rid of, the higher your social class will be in the next hand. Since social class is indicated by your seating, each hand ends with players changing seats to reflect the new social order (well, maybe grandma won't play after all).

The great thing about Dalmuti is that it can be enjoyed by adults, but can be played by an eight year old. Dalmuti may not be the next Magic. But it could be the next Uno.



The Great Dalmuti™ & © 1995 Wizards of the Coast

THE WORLD WIDE WEB

The World Wide Web is about to double in size overnight, taking the computer revolution one step further along. Why cover this in a magazine about comics? Well, because the Web will impact every aspect of our lives, including comics. Also, the Web is cool. You do want to read about cool things, don't you?

The Web is basically a connection between the average Joe's computer and the computers of the rest of the world. Want to visit AT &T, see what courses are available at the University, check out what IBM is offering for sale? It's all on the Web. You can whisk yourself away from one company to another, clicking on-screen buttons along the way to buy products or acquire information. In the not-too-distant future, televisions could be hooked up to the web, creating an information superhighway that everyone can use.

Several publishers in comics are now working feverishly to hook up with the Web. As you might expect, king-of-promotion Entity Comics already beat most everyone else to it. Their Web "page" just went online. Marvel has also made the full pages of a few comic books available on the Web.

The Web currently has two million regular users, we are told. However, just weeks ago CompuServe made new web-browsing software freely available to its couple million members. And, America Online has now made a test version of web access available to their members. The America Online version will really revolutionize web access because the millions who are already "AOL" members will be able to enter the web from several different points in the service. Web entry will appear seamless.

The Web is growing in importance quickly — it could easily have as great an impact on American society as the invention of cable, TV, or radio. There is no doubt it will affect fandom.

Possible effects include: (1) Small publisher growth since retailers will be able to order direct right off the web. (2) Lower paper-comic sales as fans find they can read full comic books right on the web. (3) Increased mail order sales instead of retail sales as consumers are bombarded with discount opportunities on the Web.

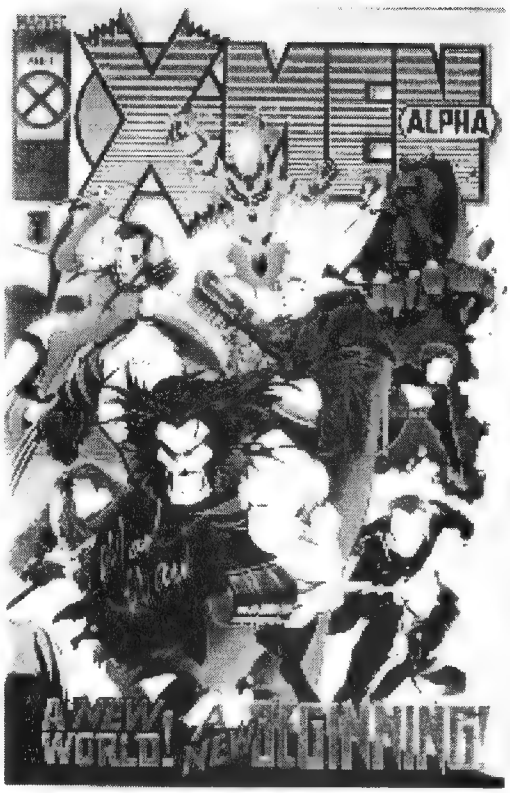
Current opportunities for dealers on the Web include great prices on some comics, great access to the latest information, and a pretty inexpensive way to sell comics.

The Web will impact every aspect of our lives, including comics.

For more on the Web, look for **Vantage's** special Internet issue, due out in October. **Vantage** is also working on its own Web pag. Our Web page will be the best. Visit it.

And by the way, you can reach **Vantage** at Robvantage@aol.com. Just like everyone else in business, we've been rushing to become a player in the Internet game too.

VANTAGE EXTENDS X-MEN ALPHA COUPON



X-Men™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Two retailers have informed **Vantage** that they were disappointed when **Vantage** #1 arrived with a *limited* coupon for **X-Men: Alpha** signed. **Vantage** used ambiguous wording when promoting **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** #1 through our distributors. We apologize to all of you and are taking the following steps to rectify the situation.

We have now made the **X-Men: Alpha** coupon in **Vantage** #1 unlimited. Everyone who sends in an **Alpha** coupon will get a copy of **X-Men: Alpha.** You must send in one original coupon per copy. You can send all of your coupons in one envelope, but each coupon must be filled out. If you will send in more than 10 coupons please call ahead for further instructions.

So who will the Visitor be? Definitely not Archer.

The Visitor™ & © 1995 Acclaim Comics Inc.

VISITOR IS REVEALED

The Visitor's identity will be revealed in **Visitor** #13. Not a gem or a pick hit to click in either of the major catalogs, not even a hot flash in Advance Comics, **Visitor** #13 reveals the Visitor's secret identity.

This is a real potential powder-keg, for **Visitor** sales are pretty low right now. This issue should have much of the industry talking and if anything from Valiant has a shot in the after-market this year, this is the one.

Visitor #13 is also the final issue of the series, and **Shadow-man** is also being canceled with #43. Both are slated to be launched again at a later date.

So who will the Visitor be? "Definitely not Archer. If people looked hard enough [at the back-issues] they could figure it out ... They *could* figure it out." a Valiant spokesman told us.

Gen 13 Issue Had Flip Cover

The **Gen 13** issue of the WildStorm Rising crossover shipped in mid-May with a flip cover. It had Windsor-Smith art on one side and different art on the other. Right now, if WildStorm put out a **Gen 13** variant cover that the staff sneezed on it would be hot. The book is going gangbusters, and **Vantage** expects the crossover to do well in general.

Nude Deodato Cover

Bloodfire / Hellina Nude #1 will feature a nude cover by Mike Deodato. Hellina, not Bloodfire, will appear nude on the cover. The issue also marks the return of the world's first HIV-positive superhero, according to Lightning.

The non-nude version of the book will arrive in stores with a variant cover by Trent Kaniuga of **Creed.** This rising star was covered by **Vantage** in **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** #9 as a real up-and-comer.

Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger™ & © 1995 Big Entertainment

Wonder Woman™ & © 1995 DC Comics

Disney Buys Big Entertainment Film Rights

Miramax Films and Big Entertainment have joined in a unique film production and publishing alliance for the Miramax/Dimension label, Miramax Co-Chairmen Harvey and Bob Weinstien. Miramax Films is a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company.

On the success of The Crow, Miramax is expanding its Dimension films label and under this deal with Big has acquired rights to three properties for film and television: Mickey Spillane's **Mike Danger,** Neil Gaiman's **Mr. Hero,** and Gene Roddenberry's **Lost Universe.**

In addition, both companies plan to publish under a newly established jointly titled comic book imprint. These books will take original concepts by directors and screenwriters and publish them as comic books, with the ultimate goal of adapting them to feature films.

Animated Series For Mask and Cyberforce

There will be a Mask animated series in October, based on the Mask comic and movie. Top Cow is producing an animated series for Fox Saturday morning. They are using the same production company that did the X-Men, going after that same high-end feel.

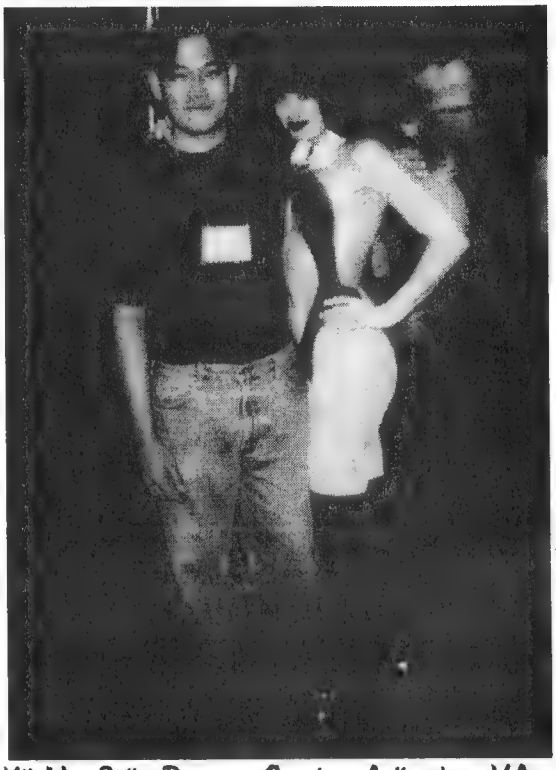
Something's Up With Avengers

Much or all of the Avengers team is being revamped. The "new" Avengers costume sketches have been leaked to **Vantage** by Marvel (see next page). **Vantage's** favorite may be Mike Deodato's Thor. **Vantage** hears that at least one member of the current team will be dropped and that Marvel is hoping to use Deodato to turn the entire Avengers line into another X-Men. We'll be watching very closely.

WildC.A.T.S / Spawn Crossover

The good news is that there will be a WildC.A.T.S / Spawn crossover, that it has already been written by Alan Moore, that it's mostly already penciled by Scott Clark, and that we hear it's a fine looking book. It's just about ready to go. The bad news (you knew that was coming) is that it was originally scheduled for August but it has now been postponed to November. Why the wait? Image doesn't want to solicit too many books all at once for this summer.

So, Image fans, you'll just have to wait for the crossover of the year, knowing it's collecting dust in some Image file cabinet. Ahh, the trials of being a comic fan.



Kit Ng, Jolly Rogers Comics, Arlington, VA poses with Vampirella. ™ & © Harris Comics 1995.

Capital Acquires Competitor

Capital City Distribution has acquired Friendly Frank's Distribution, Inc, **Vantage** has learned. Capital is not buying most of Friendly Frank's assets or liabilities, although the ongoing service of customers will be Capitals responsibility.

Zealot ©, ™ & © Aegis Entertainment, Inc. dba Wildstorm Productions, 1995

Zealot Miniseries

Zealot is a bad girl with a sword who was introduced by Image long before most other bad girls, said Image spokesman Jeff Mariott. Now she's got her own high-quality mini due out from WildStorm.

This is a major comic book event, because this is not just an Image book, it's a WildStorm book. These are the people behind **Gen 13.** They've got the rep for success, they've got access to the top writers and artists in the nation, and now they've got a bad girls book. **Zealot** launches in August and is written by Ron Marz.

Shi - Senryaku

We keep telling you, Bill ain't stupid. Here's an exciting twist on the Rave/Source type of comic book without the normal lameness.

Tucci takes Shi through the first twelve of the Japanese "Thirty-Six Strategies." Contributing artists include Bill Tucci, Jim Lee (!), Dave Sim, Geof Darrow, Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti, Nelson, and many more. Each artist will reveal a different aspect of the haunting, awe-inspiring woman-warrior.

The text will explore the subtle intricacies of warfare — the devious ploys. Tucci's friend, Vito Carlucci, conceived the idea for the mini-series and part of the proceeds will go to help his battle against multiple sclerosis.

Advance-orderers may order this book like it's just another source book, but **Vantage** has spoken to Tucci about the book and we are expecting something really special. Due out in July.

"New" Avengers Costume Sketches

Avengers Artwork™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Small Press Swimsuit Spectacular To Benefit Cancer

Over 30 of the comic industry's best-known small press creators have contributed to a benefit comic due out in June.

Teri S. Wood, Terry Moore, Don Simpson, and others are featured in the Small Press Swimsuit Spectacular #1 from Allied Comics. "The response from the creators has simply been overwhelming. Comic fans are in for a real treat," said Bob Elinskas of the American Cancer Society.

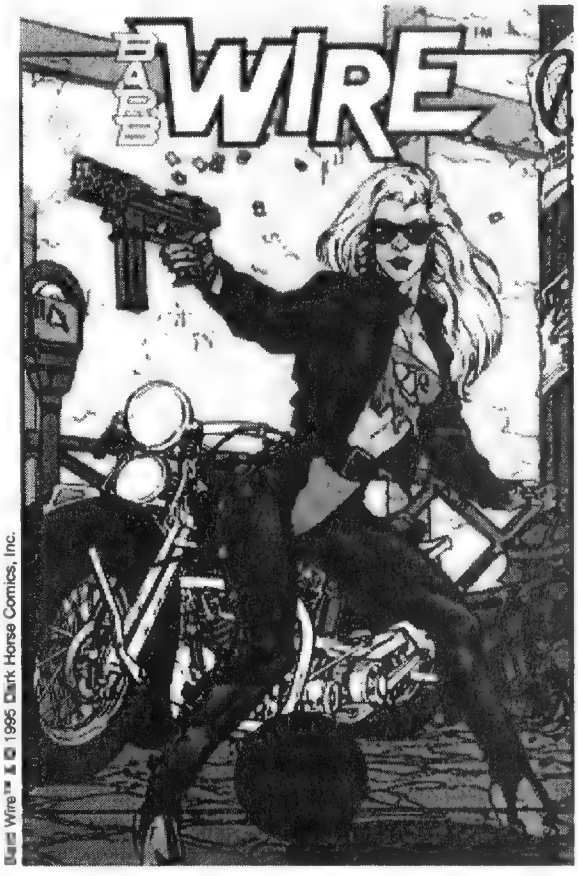
100% of the proceeds will go directly to the American Cancer Society. Recommended.

Prophet Cards

Extreme's Prophet will be getting his own card set. Over half of the cards are to be drawn by Platt and others will be drawn by Liefeld.

Barb Wire - The Movie

Dark Horse says a Barb Wire movie is really happening. The movie is to star Pamela Anderson from Baywatch.



Barb Wire™ & © 1996 Dark Horse Comics, Inc.

SkyBox Master Series™ SkyBorg: Into The Vortex © SkyBox International Inc.

Promo Card by Julie Bell for SkyBox Master Series Creators Edition

Card / CD-Rom Crossover

As far as **Vantage** knows it's the world's first Card / CD-Rom crossover. SkyBox will sell original science fiction cards and a CD-Rom game separately. The game will allow the player to tour a space ship, encountering each of the cards' characters in stasis. Translation: the characters don't move in the game — they are in the same poses as in the cards.

Still, the game is way cool. Some of it is puzzle-solving, some of it is arcade-shooting, and all of it comes with neat audio (reminds **Vantage** of the Encarta CD-Rom encyclopedia). From what we saw of it, we want to play it and we want those cards!

The cards are called the SkyBox Master Series Creators Edition, featuring original art of original characters from Julie Bell, Dave Dorman, Stelfreeze and others. The CD-Rom is called Into The Vortex. SkyBox is making a pretty big deal out of it and stores in affluent communities may want to take a close look at the situation.

What?

Our brain hurts. **Vantage** watched SkyBox (owned by Marvel) promote Superman cards (a DC property) at the Capital City trade show (currently not lovey-dovey with Marvel and DC). Not to mention that DC and Marvel are fierce competitors. Weird.

Avengelyne™ is © and trademark Rob Liefeld, Inc. & Little Wolf Prods. 1995

Maximum Press / Image Crossover

The negotiations for the first Maximum Press / Image crossover must have been intense — Liefeld probably talked to himself about it for hours.

In any case, the crossover will be a cool one indeed. Two one shots featuring Avengelyne and Glory will be published, one by each company. Deodato will do one book and Liefeld will do the other. Mmmmmmm.

Pocahontas and Star Trek

The Pocahontas animated movie from Disney is due out in June, and we all know how well animated Disney movies have been doing lately. SkyBox will have a set of trading cards based on the movie and also a Disney premium set featuring older original cels, both due out this summer. Also, look for a Star Trek Voyager set in June.

Superman Cards

Yes, those Superman cards we alluded to above are coming from SkyBox in 1996. Every single one of them will be drawn by Joe Jusko. Cool.

GI Joe, The Mark, Magic, and Mars

GI Joe is coming back, with new toys and new comics from Dark Horse. There will be TV ads pushing — get this — the comics, not the toys! Johnson and Stroman, previously of Tribe and Axis Comics, will be doing **The Mark** for Dark Horse. In July, look for the Expansion Chronicles with cards from past Magic: The Gathering expansion sets. Ice Age is still coming in June. A Mars Attacks movie is scheduled for 1996 from Warner Brothers. Topps will be publishing a Mars Attacks comic.

Bone Joins Image

Jeff Smith has taken his critically acclaimed comic book, **Bone,** to Image. Yes, Image will now publish **Bone** instead of Smith's Cartoon Books. Though Smith will retain ownership, Image will be responsible for soliciting and an Image "i" will appear on future books.

Gold Gen 13 Is Fake!

A fake gold foil logo **Gen 13 #1** has been manufactured, without the consent or knowledge of WildStorm or Image, said WildStorm Marketing Director Jeff Mariotte.

This is an unauthorized product. Collectors are warned not to invest money in these fake gold logo editions, said a WildStorm statement. The company is asking price guides not to list this edition in their guides.

"While there were 13 different covers on **Gen 13 #1**, there was no gold foil edition," Mariotte said, "13 seems like plenty to us without muddying the water further with gold books."

WildStorm requests that any information leading to the source of these fake gold books be forwarded to them at: Jeff Mariotte, WildStorm Productions, 7910 Ivanhoe Ave., Suite 439, La Jolla, CA 92037.

Gen-13®, ™ & © Aegis Entertainment, Inc. dba Wildstorm Productions, 1995

Joe Quesada Does Nine Image Covers

Joe Quesada will be penciling nine inter-connecting covers that will be released throughout the course of the summer. Each cover contains a single image that collectively forms a larger collage piece that will be released as a poster in the fall.

We are told that the covers could come out as variants ... or not. It's all still up in the air. In fact, Quesada is still working on the covers right now. Jimmy Palmiotti will provide the inks.

"We're big fans of Joe's and Jimmy's work and are excited to see them illustrate some of the Extreme characters," said Extreme President Rob Liefeld.

Alan Moore Writes Warchild

The next story arc for Maximum Press' **Warchild** will be written by Alan Moore.

"Alan Moore is the most popular writer the comic industry has ever seen," states Extreme Marketing Director Matt Hawkins.

"His work is unsurpassed in its depth and complexity, and his versatility — from superheroes to historical narratives — boggles the mind."

"He told me that he wanted to do a Quentin Tarantino, fantasy, medieval, kick-ass action book," remarked Rob Liefeld.

Marvel Publicity Gets Gutted

Marvel has quietly let go its entire publicity department of several people.

This is the department that handled promoting Marvel to magazines like **Vantage**. Publicity to comic-related mags will now be handled by the marketing department that has traditionally handled publicity to folks outside the industry — like USA Today or NBC news.

In the face of fallen sales and lower market share for Marvel, insiders see this as yet another sign of the times. For May in particular, Marvel market share "took a massive blow," according to Capital City Distribution. It fell about 7% in the wake of the Age of Apocalypse conclusion, to 28%. DC is unusually close to Marvel at 21% and Image really took off, hitting 17%.

Force Works™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Diamond Moves Into Canada

Diamond Comic Distributors, IC announced plans to bring its services to comic book specialty retailers in Eastern Canada by opening a new distribution center. This is the area that had been serviced by the now bankrupt Andromeda Distributing.

"This new facility will enable Diamond to establish a long-needed presence in Eastern Canada," said Diamond President and CEO Steve Geppi. "We're very excited about the prospect of introducing our services to hundreds of Canadian comic book specialty retailers who, because of geographic or other considerations, may have been unable to take full advantage of them."

Geppi explained that sites for the new facility were currently being considered in both Montreal and Toronto, and that the search for a distribution center manager was well underway. "We are examining every option available to us," he said, "and we expect to announce our decisions very shortly. The opening of this new distribution center will represent the opening of a new frontier for Diamond," Geppi added, "and of a new era in comics retailing for Eastern Canada."

Hardcase™ & © 1995 Malibu Comics

Malibu Layoffs

Malibu Comics is down-sizing due to past and present sales disappointments, **Vantage** has learned. Layoffs have even included one of the original founders of Malibu Comics (who was one of the sharpest guys there).

Marvel Moves Terry Stewart

Marvel has named Jerry Calabrese president of its Marvel Comics Group. In his newly created role, Calabrese will assume responsibility for Marvel's publishing operations as well as Marvel's consumer marketing group which he formerly headed as its president. Calabrese, instead of Stewart, will oversee the creative aspects of publishing comics.

Stewart, former president of Marvel's comic book publishing unit, has now been named a vice chairman of Marvel Entertainment Group and will have a broad range of corporate responsibilities that includes investor relations, character-based theme parks, live action tours, and restaurant development.

Both men will continue to report to William C. Bevins, president and CEO of Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Malibu and Heroes World Were Cheap

Marvel paid $29.5 million for Heroes World Distributions, Malibu, and Welsh publishing, according to Marvel's annual report. The annual report said this was the total paid for all three added together, but it did not break down the $29.5 million into the three respective purchase prices.

This is pocket change for Marvel, which had over $500 million in revenues and over $50 million in net income in 1994. Fleer, in contrast, was purchased for $285 million. Panini, an Italian sticker company, was purchased for $110 million. Though given little press in the U.S., the Panini acquisition is apparently a key component of Marvel's future plans. Marvel talks it up in the annual report.

The Marvel Plan

"Over the past five years, [Marvel] has diversified into a broadly based youth entertainment company," said Marvel's just-released 1994 annual report. "For example, in 1990, net revenues from comic book publishing were approximately 87% of the company's total net revenues as compared to approximately 25% in 1990."

Sales through comic shops in 1993 "experienced an unusual increase in revenues due in large part to speculative purchases of comic books," said the annual report.

WIN BLOOD WULF #8, SIGNED BY DAERICK GROSS!

Blood Wulf™ & © 1995 Rob Liefeld

VANTAGE™
COMIC & CARD PICKS

You! Yes, you can win Blood Wulf #8, personally signed by artist Daerick Gross. All you need to do is fill out the coupon below (no substitutions or copies accepted) and send it to the ever-generous folks at Vantage, and you could be the lucky stiff that walks away with this fantastic comic! Yes, you! Go ahead, you know you wanna do it...reach for a pen...that's it...just do it!

☐ **Yes, I want to win Blood Wulf #1, signed by Daerick Gross!.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ Age (optional): _____

☐ Hey, **Vantage**, As long as I'm writing you, here's my quick two cents for **Vantage Viewpoints**! I want you to know what my dream crossover would be, what I think of this month's news, what I'm having for dinner tonight, or some other pointless drivel:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I usually get my **Vantage** (check one): ☐ At a store ☐ From a mail order company ☐ From a distributor ☐ By subscription ☐ Other: _____

Vantage BW Contest 13000 W. Blue Mound Rd., Suite #110 Elm Grove, WI 53122

X-Files ™ & © 1995 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.

SIGNED LIMITED $9.95

BY STEFAN PETRUCHA

TO 500 COPIES!

ARE WE PSYCHOTIC?

Comics You Want...

the VANTAGE Signature Series

Vantage has made no special arrangements to subsidize the costs of producing signed comics—we are passing the savings on to you, our valued customers! Don't over pay $30-$60 for a signed book again! *Vantage Signature Series* comics are signed and strictly limited to unfathomably low quantities, and are truly affordable!

The catch? There's two of 'em:

1) You must use the coupon provided—no copies.

2) If supplies run out we will return checks at random (most people actually do get what they order)!

Offer expires August 15th, 1995

X-FILES #8

Finally the hottest comic in fandom now comes signed from Vantage! A former Vantage pick, the X-Files series has taken off and taken over the world! The series is unstoppable—a government plot? Maybe.

Now you can own a signed piece of it. Signed by Stefan Petrucha and limited to 500 copies, X-Files #8 will not be made available anywhere else! Each copy will arrive with a Certificate of Authenticity. Warning: Owning this issue may help you ferret out aliens.

☐ Yes, I'd like the X-Files #8, signed and limited to 500 copies, available through this offer! I understand that if **Vantage** receives orders for over 500 copies, my coupon and money may be selected at random to be returned (I will receive a full refund).

Enclosed is $9.95 + $2.50 (shipping) = $12.45
Canadian orders, same price. All other foreign, add US $2.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Please send check or money order with this coupon (no copies) to :

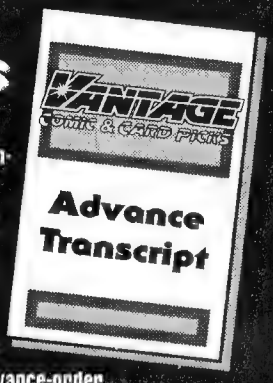
Vantage Signature Series, Dept. XF
13000 W. Blue Mound Rd., Suite #110
Elm Grove, WI 53122

TWO GREAT WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE!

SUBSCRIBE TO VANTAGE COMIC & CARD PICKS!

Vantage Comic & Card Picks **is the world's only magazine for people who are really serious about the comic book marketplace! We don't cover what happened three Tuesdays ago. Oh no, *Vantage* puts it on the line and makes for-real, logical predictions about the future of comics! Get serious. Get *Vantage*.**

GET OUR PICKS WEEKS EARLIER!



This is our most popular subscription option! Each month, before we send *Vantage* to the printer we will mail to you an advance transcript of our comic picks section! This special advance edition of our picks reaches subscribers before each month's advance-order deadline!* That's right -- get your comics at a discount by ordering in advance and watch your savings make up for the low *Vantage* subscription price! Plus, you'll get our inside back-issue tips before anyone else! In addition to the Market Guide (the first several pages of this magazine), we throw in our most interesting and most important articles for that month. This "sneak preview" service brings you the best of *Vantage*, before your advance-order deadline!

SPECIAL LIMITED TIME OFFER!

Get a FREE subscription to the complete magazine...

...when you subscribe to our advance service!

Amazing! I understand that I will get monthly issues of **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** as they come out! The magazine will reach me each month at about the same time it reaches my local comic shop! Plus, I pay no extra charge for over-sized or special issues! I'll make check or M.O. out to:

Vantage
Sub. Dept. PRR
10238 W. National Ave., # 166
West Allis, WI 53227.

☐ $34.95, 12 Months
☐ $64.95, 24 Months

NAME:_____
ADDRESS:_____
_____
_____
PHONE: (_____)_____

☐ Check here if you own or work at a comic shop

☐ Check here if you sell at shows or are otherwise a dealer

Awesome! I understand that I will get a special advance copy of the comic book picks section, and that I will get my copy before the ADVANCE-ORDER DEADLINE! Plus, I get the most important monthly articles too! I'll make check or M.O. out to:

Vantage
Sub. Dept. MG
10238 W. National Ave., # 166
West Allis, WI 53227.

☐ $49.50, 12 Months
☐ $89.50, 24 Months

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
_____
PHONE: (_____) _____

☐ In addition to my advance subscription service please sign me up for a **FREE** one-year subscription to the finished magazine (a $34.95 value)!

We reserve the right to change info or picks if new information comes in before we print **Vantage**. For changes other than small corrections and minor adjustments, we will keep you updated.

Canadian customers same price U.S., timeliness not guaranteed for transcript. Other foreign, price is $59.50 U.S per year for just magazine or just transcript, or $95.50 U.S. per year for magazine plus transcript, timeliness not guaranteed for transcript.

NON-SPORTS PICKS

VANTAGE Card Picks

Star Wars Dark Empire Metal Set
Linsner-Dawn & Beyond Chase Cards
Empire Strikes Back Widevision Cards
Gen 13 Chase Cards (WildStorm Archives)

Dawn ™ & © 1995 Joseph Linsner

Amazing — a month where the chase cards are more important than sealed boxes. Could this result from the fact that Fleer isn't releasing a Marvel card set?

SELL THE FORCE, LUKE

Is it 1997 yet? That's the year we hope to see Star Wars, Part One. (The first movie released was actually Part 4 — A New Hope — go back and watch the start of the film again!) From the way fans are already snapping up anything Star Wars, it seems a safe bet that the movie will set every kind of record possible, perhaps even "most successful merchandising ever." As part of keeping the Force alive, this month brings us two more card releases. The bargain basement yields the more interesting of the two — the Star Wars: Dark Empire Metal Card Set from Metallic Images.

The Dark Empire mini-series from Dark Horse Comics was the opening gun in the return of Star Wars, and it featured six impressive covers from Dave Dorman. For about $15 you can buy reproductions of these covers on a set of six metal cards in a metal tin. The comics jumped from $3 to $25-30 almost overnight due to the limited supply. While it is unlikely that dealers will under-order the cards, the supply may be limited, and **Vantage** expects that the demand for them in a few years could still be increasing. This set is significantly cheaper than the other metal card sets, and as long as the total print run isn't too high the price should rapidly catch up to the other sets.

Topps is following up its successful Star Wars Widevision cards with the most obvious sequel in a long time, the Empire Strikes Back Widevision cards. The first set sold quickly, and everybody who bought a box or a set will be back for more. The real dilemma for collectors will be the chase cards. Once again there are probably only two Topps Finest Chromium chase cards per box, making it nearly impossible to collect the full set of ten cards. (Watch for price increases on those puppies!) In addition, a second chase has been added which features six posters that were used for the movie's release. Even if you don't care about the card set, keep an eye out for cheap(er) chase cards — they'll sell quickly to SW fans who really, really want them all.

Topps is following up its successful Star Wars Widevision cards with the most obvious sequel in a long time: Empire Strikes Back

BAD GIRLS ON CARDS

Mention bad girls and most comic fans will quickly give you a familiar list: Lady Death, Shi, Vampirella, etc. Most of them will omit Dawn, who may well pre-date all of them. Linsner has been putting out some of the best artwork **Vantage** has seen in the Cry For Dawn and

WildStorm ™ & © 1995 Aegis

Drama books, but the lack of an on-going story-line and regular issues has hampered sales. Of course, Dawn #1 is on its way...The "mature audience" market that these cards will be aimed at has already shown, through the sales of Boris and Olivia card sets, that it is sufficiently large, and these cards may well appeal to a larger audience due to the comic-fan tie-in.

A box of cards will have enough cards for the sorters in the back room to put together four sets of cards, so even though the artwork is fabulous, the price of sets shouldn't push up to new heights quickly — at least not until they do a chromium set! The real winners in this case are the chase cards. The six chromium cards should prove popular (just look at the Lady Death chromium chase card that Linsner did for the original Evil Ernie card set to see the potential!), and **Vantage** expects the Dawn three-card subset will prove to be the most sought-after subset that Comic Images has ever produced. The medallion and autograph cards are obvious killer cards as well.

Not to be overlooked: there is a binder available that features an uncut six-card strip of cards that contains new art.

MORE COVER CHASING

WildStorm is finally releasing more of its early cover art in a card series, the WildStorm Archives. This all-chromium set features familiar pictures at a cost of about $2.50 a pop for six cards, a price point that has worked for them before. The built-in familiarity of the artwork may help sales, but that's not where the action is: the chase set consists of the eleven variant Gen 13 issue one covers with refractor coatings.

The single Gen 13 chase card from the WildStorm set easily sells for two or three times the normal prices for the other chase cards in that set, and it shouldn't surprise anybody that **Vantage** expects these eleven chase cards to chart rapidly increasing prices as collectors scramble to put together a full set.

Jim Lee fans will find something to love with this set as well. Each five box case comes with a limited lithograph that is signed by Jim Lee! The small case size should make this collectible more affordable than other case premiums that have been around lately.

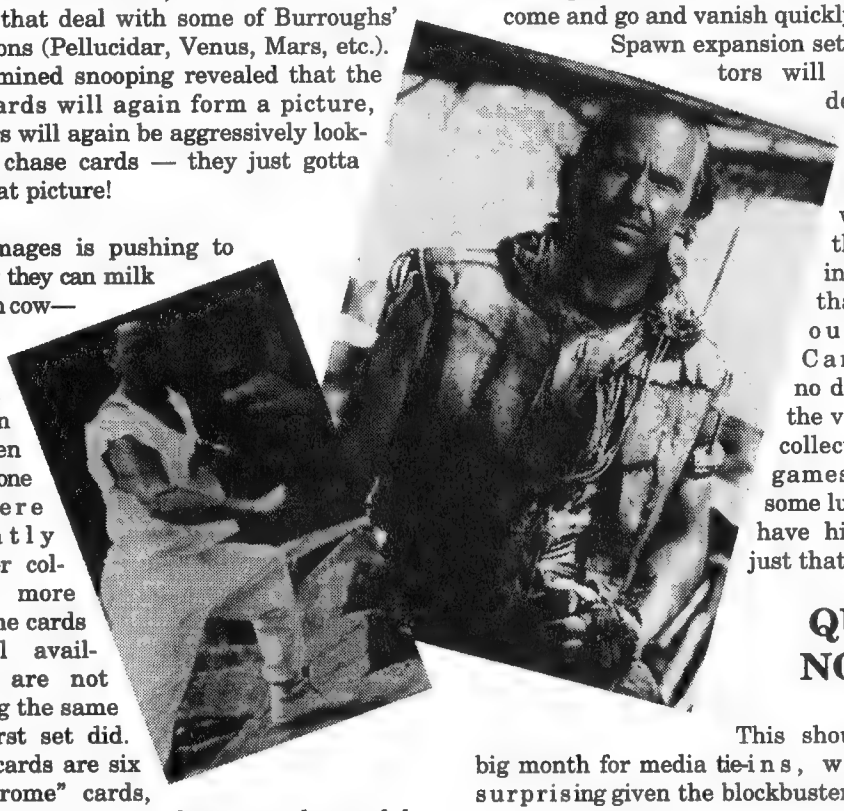
BRAWN AND SWORDS

Fans of biceps, barbarians, and adventure cards have several good choices this month.

Jim Lee fans will find something to love with this set as well. Each five box case comes with a limited lithograph that is signed by Lee!

FPG is releasing their second Joe Jusko set, Jusko's Edgar Rice Burroughs II cards. Like the first set, the ninety cards will all be on 24-point stock (bumping the price a few dollars), giving

them a more solid look and feel. Rather than containing just Tarzan cards, the set will contain more cards that deal with some of Burroughs' other creations (Pellucidar, Venus, Mars, etc.). Some determined snooping revealed that the six chase cards will again form a picture, so collectors will again be aggressively looking for the chase cards — they just gotta complete that picture!



Comic Images is pushing to see how long they can milk the Cimmerian cow—the Conan III All-Chromium cards are on their way. When set II was done there were apparently either fewer collectors or more boxes, for the cards are still available, and are not appreciating the same way the first set did. The chase cards are six "Magna-Chrome" cards, a three-card Greatest Battles set, and a medallion card (we can only assume that holofoil chase cards will show up again as they are still unmentioned in official releases). The big question: will dealers under-order after the so-so results of Series Two, or is the gleam gone from the sword? **Vantage** likes these cards, but worries that they might be coming out too soon after the last release.

SPECULATIVE CORNER

Caliber Comics has released a number of comics that have found niche markets, and they are in the process of releasing (heaven help us) a collectible card game, Power Cards. This is a game which features characters with special powers (**Vantage** is caught at a loss for words because the terms Super-Hero and Superhero are actually registered trademarks, and nobody can use them to refer to products without permission from Marvel and/or DC). Okay, okay, stifle that yawn — this game is different, it's got Spawn.

Oh, not right away — the original card set is (probably) generic, but late summer will bring an expansion set that features Todd's ever-popular characters, and future expansion sets include Kabuki (yes, Caliber's bad girl).

It is quite likely that the original cards will come and go and vanish quickly, but when the Spawn expansion set appears collectors will show up and demand the cards — and a lot of them will probably want to collect the whole set, including those that are coming out now. Cards that will no doubt get lost in the veritable flood of collectible card games. Cards that some lucky people may have hidden away for just that demand.

QUICK NOTES

This should be another big month for media tie-ins, which is not surprising given the blockbuster movies coming out in the summer.

Want to annoy adults? Two words: Power Rangers. Need to hear them again? Of course, kids still tend to get excited at those two words, proving that recut zillion-year-old Japanese television shows do have a potential market in the U.S. This summer brings us (sigh) the Power Rangers Movie, to be, um, augmented by Fleer's Ultra Power Rangers Movie cards. Not only are there 150 normal cards capturing the images on the screen, but there are 24 pop-up cards (one per pack!) and 12 holograms. Lets face it, any store that doesn't have these cards will lose customers

Want to annoy adults? Two words: Power Rangers. Any store that doesn't have these cards will lose customers...

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers ™ & © 1995 Saban Int'l. Waterworld ™ & © 1995 Universal City Studios Inc.

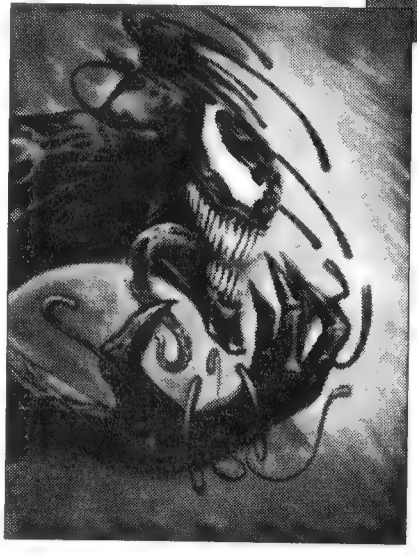
Token super-hero cards this month: Skybox is releasing the DC Villains cards.

to those that do; but any store that does have them will no doubt see their pogs sales slump as the money is redirected into Power Rangers packs. Shucks, they even had enough sense to set up the packs to sell for "only" $1.50 — just don't stock up too heavily on these cards, because once they're gone, well, nobody is likely to miss them.

The Crow — great comic series, popular card series. Judge Dredd, so-so imported comic series, questionable card set. **Vantage** doesn't really think that Edge Entertainment's movie stills of Sylvester Stallone and friends are likely to do much even if the movie does — think back to the Terminator movies, and all those boxes of cards available for about a dollar a box down at the mall.

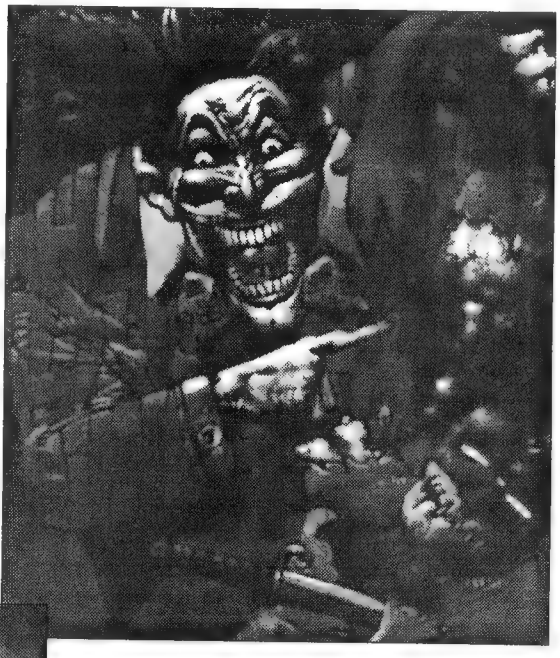
Waterworld is a semi-SciFi film set in a future where there is no dry land. The 150-card Ultra set from Fleer is supplemented by three levels of chase cards, including double-foil cards, prismatic foil cards, and holograms. But just looking at the ads causes **Vantage** to pause and consider: if the film isn't a big hit, the cards die. And even if the movie is a hit, this isn't even as exciting as the pictures from Stargate were — and that film was a hit and the cards still died (ever even seen a box of them?). Tread water carefully on this one.

Advertising set of the month: Coors. Remember any memorable Coors pictures? Neither does **Vantage** (perhaps they'll have a few cards that feature the Rocky Mountain streams that gave their all in the brewing of the beer). Even more daunting are the chase sets: a 15-card set, a ten-card set, three phone cards, and a six-card foil set. Will anybody really have that much patience? Now, if they'd just had the sense to ship the cards in cans instead of packs ... although the cards may sell much better in the Western states where Coors had limited distribution for so long.



FPG is also bringing out the Fantastic Art of Arthur Suydam cards. Never heard of him? Well, seriously consider how few household names are left! On the plus side, he has done numerous Aliens and Predators pictures, so his style may prove familiar. This is a set where dealers will have to put together display sets if they hope to sell the cards.

Token super-hero cards this month: it's actually a super villains set. SkyBox is releasing the DC Villains cards, an all-painted set of cards.



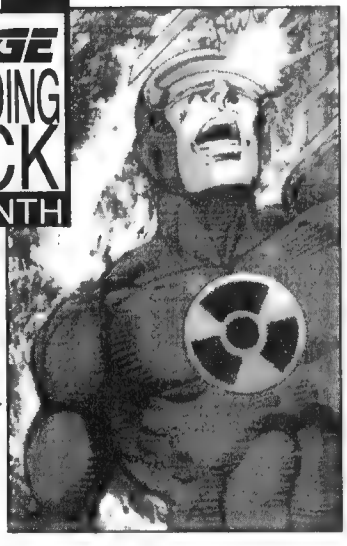
Venom ™ & © 1995 Marvel Ent. Group. Joker & Batman ™ & © 1995 DC Comics.

Vantage is a little concerned that the set features just the bad guys, but the artists involved give us hope for some knock-out cards. The chase cards will (once again!) be the main draw: nine spectra-edge cards that form a picture (requiring you to bust down two boxes), three foil-embossed cards that feature "the most infamous acts in DC history" (three boxes to get all of them), and a SkyMotion card of Two-Face (now you need to open five boxes). Actually, the most fun thing about this set might be debating the three infamous acts — destroying Coastal City, killing Reverse Flash, bringing back Congorilla, going exclusive with Diamond...

COMICS ARE FOR READING First!

By Rich Keller

TOP VANTAGE READING PICK OF THE MONTH



Solar, Man of the Atom © & ® 1995 Acclaim/Valiant

Solar, Man of the Atom
Acclaim/Valiant
$2.50

A few years ago, when the Big Two, DC and Marvel, became the Big Six, a drastic change occurred. Artists, who had been content drawing the stories at the big D and big M, moved to the Images and the Malibus of the comics world and became artists/writers. Such creators as the five founders of Image Comics (and if you don't know who they are by now, you've probably been watching the Simpson trial too long), John Byrne, George Perez, Keith Giffen, Bart Sears, and so on are included in the list. This month, a new name can be added, as Superman's Dan Jurgens moves over to the big A (Acclaim Comics, that is) and its Valiant imprint to script and draw the adventures of another superhuman — Solar, Man of the Atom.

Now, some of you readers may be asking the simple questions, "Solar who?" or "Isn't he the guy who ripped off Cyclops' visor?" To answer both questions: Actually, he borrowed the visor from the X-man; and, Solar has been one of the cornerstones of the Valiant comic universe since its inception over four years ago. And, while he's participated in all of the major crossovers by that company, he's managed to maintain a low profile as one of Valiant's most powerful superhumans.

That is, until Acclaim bought Valiant up and initiated Birthquake back in March of this year. During that time, Valiant trimmed their line from something like 16 to nine bimonthly titles, and brought on some of comics' brightest artists and writers. Solar was no exception to this change and Jurgens, along with inker Dick Giordano, have begun the process of making him one of highest profile heroes of the company.

As seen from his days on the Superman titles, Jurgens has the ability to take an existing hero's history and build on it without totally erasing what has gone on before. The same goes for this book, as he has taken the essential character that Solar has grown into and thrown

Jurgens has the ability to take an existing hero's history and build on it without totally erasing what had gone on before.

him into a universe that he's totally unfamiliar with. A universe where the President is a former superhero from WW-II and all paranormals are registered with the government. Yet, Jurgens makes the reader feel like this is the way it has always been in this title and we've known these heroes forever.

Jurgens is also good at combining several story-telling elements into one plot line. On one hand, the current storyline has plenty of superhuman action. However, there's also a great mystery going on here, as the other paranormals of this universe try to figure out who the heck this Solar is. Also throw in a theological thread, as some of the characters think that he is God (yes, the Lord in Heaven himself). Put those elements all together and you have a complex, yet easy-to-read story that keeps the reader anticipating the next issue.

If you've never read a Valiant book in your life, this is a great book to start with. With action, mystery, and the writing/drawing of Jurgens, Solar can't miss. Get it before it's gone.

Face it, there are just too many gosh darn super-hero books out there, and, as is the case with over-saturation of a product, readers sometimes get tired of reading about people in spandex tights performing feats that can't be done in the real world. (Of course, I have the ability to fly and shoot heat beams from my hands, but that's only when I'm off my medication.) Sometimes, they want something different, something where a being of infinitesimal powers isn't waiting to rule the world. Sure, DC's Vertigo line and Dark Horse Comics provide some of the stories in the mainstream market; however, the best place to look for this change of pace is in the independent market. One such book is Midnite's Quickies by One Shot Press.

The title, and the company, are different than most independents. First, One Shot Press has actually been around a while, almost five years. Second, it was founded by an 84-year-old gentleman, John C. Bunn. Third, Midnite's Quickies is a horror anthology series written and drawn by the readers. What? A comic done by readers for readers, what a concept! Not only that, but there are reviews of other independent comics as well. The book is a virtual love fest.

Midnite's Quickies is a horror anthology series written and drawn by the readers. What? A comic done by readers for readers, what a concept!

Seriously, this is a great idea. Here's a book created by comic book readers written and drawn by other comic book readers. And these are good stories. A particularly enjoyable one is Hoppy, the humorous story of an alien who lands on Earth across the street from the Connecticut Tourist Center. This is the great thing about independent publishers — the sky's the limit. There are no rules saying that the creator can't do this or that. And who knows, some of the creators in Midnite's Quickies could be writing and drawing for one of the Big Six someday.

You say you've never picked up an independent comic in your life? You say that if another X-Men book comes out you'll scream? Well, take a breather and pick up Midnite's Quickies before your head explodes. Now excuse me while I fly off on my night patrol.

Hey, boys and girls, send me your material. Write to Rich Keller, Risky Associates, 25 Arney's Mt. Road, Pemberton, NJ 08068. All material received will be considered for review.

VANTAGE GAMEPICKS

Gaming Cards Market Report

The Passing Of 3rd Edition Revised

April has most significantly been marked in the collectible gaming market as being the month that 3rd Edition Revised Magic went suddenly out of print. Wizards of the Coast announced at the GAMA trade show that the 4th Edition would be phased in during the month of May and only a small percentage of outstanding orders for 3rd Edition Revised would be filled, the balance to be carried over to 4th Edition Revised.

A stampede for the 3rd Edition has now resulted in dealers offering big bucks per box within a couple weeks. Rather amazing, considering the print run for 3rd Edition Revised is the single biggest run of any Magic "Expansion," if we now consider 3rd Edition Revised to be a 1-year Expansion.

Star Wars will almost undoubtedly be the second biggest print run of a collectible card game for the year, after Ice Age. One big question in the mind of many a retailer is whether the print run will be "to orders" or allocated.

Meanwhile, Blood Wars was shipped without the fanfare that marked the release of Spellfire. Although probably a better game, and with unique artwork, it sales were fairly slow. The small print run should help ensure it doesn't get "dumped," and a second printing is already scheduled for release soon.

Towers In Time has been pushed back to "summer." This is the 3rd, or was it the 4th, announced delay. Interest on the consumer level in the game is still lukewarm. SimCity is also delayed, originally to be released in February. Consumer interest is also lukewarm on this project.

Decipher has announced release dates of "summer" for Star Trek: Alternate Universe, and August for Star Wars. Star Wars will almost undoubtedly be the second biggest print run of a collectible card game for the year, after Ice Age. One big question in the mind of many a retailer is whether the initial print run will be "to orders," or allocated. To make it a true collectible, Decipher may be forced to allocate. This, of course, brings its own sets of problems, as dealers will order multiples of their actual orders, in the hopes their allocation matches the desired quantities.

Foreign editions of Magic have been printed in Italian, French, and German. Slated for release this summer are Spanish and Japanese Revised Magic, most likely 4th Edition. The current black border versions of Italian, French, and German Revised are 3rd Edition. A white border 4th Edition of each will come out this summer, and Italy seems to be the only country to get a foreign white border 3rd Edition Revised, shipping this week.

Italians also got their own version of Dark, which shipped in March and April. Printed in Italian, with a darker, more vibrant color scheme, they are growing popular with collectors.

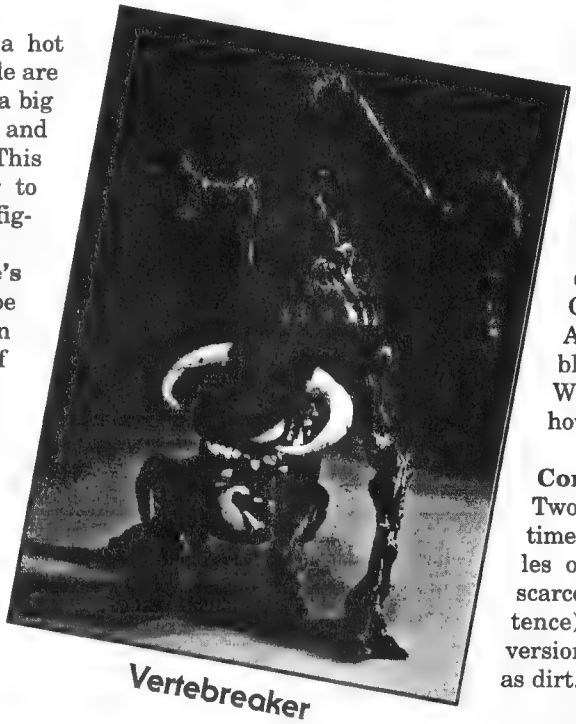
As we approach summer, the complexity of the collectible gaming market is intensifying. So many more minor collectible games have been announced, dealers and customers alike are going to have to make firm decisions about which games to choose. It is most probable that the big popular releases will far overshadow the smaller releases.

TOY picks

Looks like it's going to be a hot summer for action figures. People are getting into figure collecting in a big way and there are more dealers and collectors than ever before. This means it is harder than ever to track down those short-packed figures.

It has come to **Vantage's** attention that there should be several variations in the Spawn Deluxe Series 2 figures. Some of these variations will prove to be extremely rare so use this list to check your figures. According to our sources, these may be the variations:

Badrock: Two versions at press time, one with short missiles and one with longer missiles. Some of the newer packages also have a Youngblood sticker on the blister card.



Vertebreaker

Angela: Two versions at press time, one with her panties sprayed on and one without, there are also two different color schemes on her staff weapon. Count on the Naked Angela to be a possible big money figure. With a name like that how can it miss?

Commando Spawn: Two versions at press time, one with no speckles on the gun that is scarce (only 700 in existence) and a speckled version that is common as dirt.

Chapel: Two versions at press time, one with white face and one with gray face, also a bone knife and a gray knife.

Malebolgia: Three versions at press time, White hair, black and white hair, and gray hair.

(Not-Naked) Cosmic Angela

MOVIE TOYS

There will be lots of cool, hot movie figures this year! Batman Forever should be arriving in stores as you read this and will feature some nice villain and supporting character figures along with the usual zillion Batman figures. This movie should do well and **Vantage** predicts the figures could follow suit. Expect that villain figures Two Face and Riddler could be short-packed, in the Kenner tradition.

By far the hottest movie-based line due out this year is for a movie that is over fifteen years old, Star Wars. Don't let the vintage nature of it fool you — this line still has serious spunk. Watch for frenzied collectors to snap these up as fast as they hit the sales floor. Star Wars is the grand-daddy of collectible figure lines with legions of fans young and old. Anticipation is

Cosmic Angela, Vertebreaker™& © 1995 Todd McFarlane Prod.

Spawn, wearing his new duds

and ask if they received a truckload that day. Some stores will even check on individual figures for you and hold them until you can pick them up. Take advantage of goof slips and rain checks whenever possible.

The best way to get those hard-to-find figures is to network with other collectors. Get to know the collectors in your area. They should be easy to spot, they'll be the ones you see in the figure aisle all the time.

The computer can also be helpful as most of the online services have an area where figure collectors post the results of their shopping trips and any figures for sale or trade. Get to know your fellow collectors, it will make collecting easier and lots more fun!

building towards the upcoming new movies and everything Star Wars is blazing hot. These should start showing up around the end of July, so be prepared.

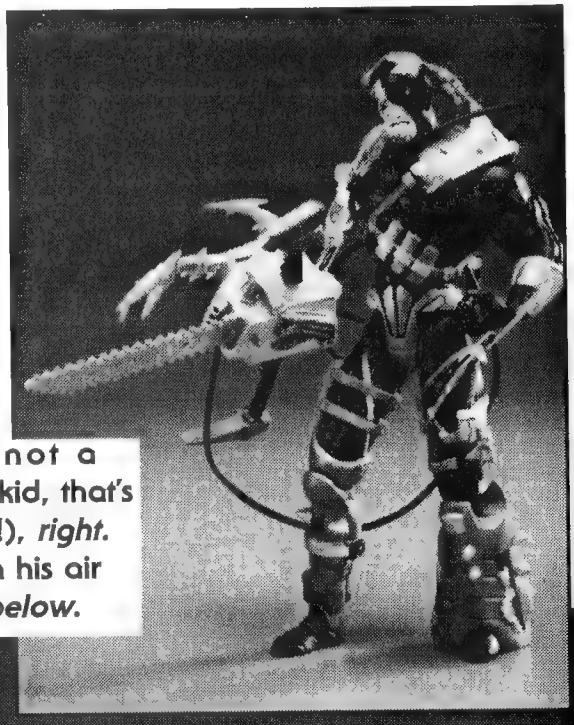
TOY SHORTS

Last summer's blockbuster, **The Mask**, finally gets its own line and offers great play value. These figures look way too fun to keep in the package. The line based on the upcoming film **Congo** offers some very strange looking gorilla figures. This Michael (**Jurassic Park**) Crichton project looks interesting. Kevin Costner's latest, **Waterworld**, is also hitting the shelves.

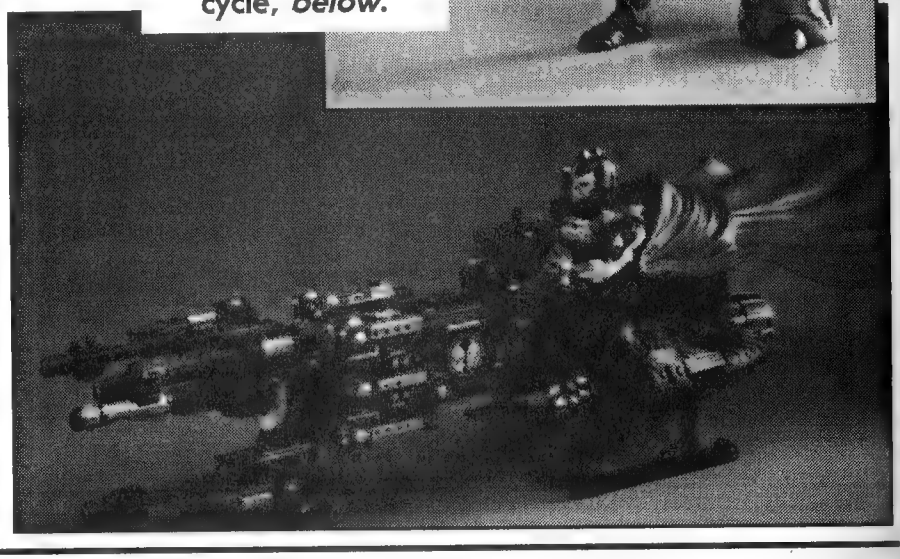
HUNTING FOR TOYS THE VANTAGE WAY

If you're brave enough to join the hunt, you've got to do it with a strategy. Here's one toy dealer's perspective:

First and foremost you need to organize your search. Map out a route that will get you to several different stores in your area without wasting miles and gas. The telephone can narrow your search pattern; call stores on your route



Curse (not a directive, kid, that's his name!), *right.* Spawn in his air cycle, *below.*



Spawn, Curse ™ & © 1995 Todd McFarlane Prod.

MAKING AN IMPACT

AN INTERVIEW WITH HIGH IMPACT'S RICKY CARRALERO

China & Jazz ™ & © 1995 High Impact

VANTAGE: ***Okay, Ricky, let's start with the classic opener: where and when were you born?***

CARRALERO: I was born July 7th, 1969 in Cuba.

VANTAGE: ***When did you know that you wanted to draw?***

CARRALERO: Since I was a little boy, all I ever did was draw. I remember that right in front of my house there was this guy who used to do oil paintings. I remember sitting for hours, watching this guy just do these incredible things. I grew up watching him, and started picking things up and started drawing.

When I left Cuba, I went to New York, and had a couple of cousins who were into comic books. I remember visiting them, and they took me to their room which was filed with these incredible posters of all these [comic] characters. One of them that I'll never forget was this huge blow-up of Judge Dredd. I thought it was incredible! They started talking to me about comic books and pulled out all these boxes with different books, and I was hooked right away. All I ever did from that day on was sit in

Ricky Carralero is one of the newest success stories in today's comics market. Raised on a diet of comics, Carralero has come into his own with High Impact and Double Impact. His art is turning heads, and turning them again. Have you seen China and Jazz yet? You will.

We figured that if we were going to come out with something, we'd have to give people what they wanted, and nothing was better than bad girls.

my house and draw.

VANTAGE: ***Give us the low-down on how* High Impact *and* Double Impact *came about.***

CARRALERO: I was an artist here in Miami and I did a lot of local shows, but I was scared to send any submissions into the big companies, because I was scared of being turned down. I met a couple of guys who were show retailers, and had a lot of good ideas for some books. So one night after a show, we were hanging out after a show, and we said, "Why don't we do a comic book?" All we had was $6000 to start with. We figured that if we were going to come out with something, we'd have to give people what they wanted, and nothing was hotter than bad girls.

I sat down and started penciling stuff, and came up with China and Jazz, who are **Double Impact**. We figured that we needed to get concerned about distributors, so I started putting together an ashcan that we could show to Diamond and Capital representatives at the Atlanta Comic Expo. Putting the ashcan together was hell. We spent night and day in Kinko's putting 200 ashcans together in one week. We rented a car and went to Atlanta, and the reps said they loved our stuff, and that was a great feeling.

VANTAGE: ***Did you originally plan to be in color? Most new books from small companies start off in black and white...***

CARRALERO: We were going to start in black and white, but after the reactions we started getting from the retailers, we were told that we'd do twice as well in color. So we decided to do color. From color, we decided to do a chromium cover on #1. For just a couple of guys out of Miami, we didn't know what we were getting ourselves into. It paid off. We heard of local retailers selling out of 300 copies in a day!

VANTAGE: ***So far, do you have any favorite work of your own? Anything that you can sit back and say, "Wow. I really hit it with that***

China & Jazz ™ & © 1995 High Impact

cover."

CARRALERO: No, I'm not able to say that yet. **Double Impact** #1 was the first comic that I put together. Talking to other artists, you hear that the first one is pretty rough, but after that, you develop your style, and it gets easier. I can't even look at some of the pages from issue one. I was penciling and inking, trying to get a very realistic look and develop my style, and you can see the differences. The first few pages were very "comic bookish," while the last few were rougher, but with a style. I'm very happy with #2. I feel that I've got my style and I can see where I'm going.

I really think that my best work is yet to come. It's like with everything else, the more you do it, the better you get.

VANTAGE: ***What's your favorite current comic?***

CARRALERO: I'm a really big fan of Marc Silvestri. I love **Cyberforce** and **Stormwatch** and his other books. I like **WildC.A.T.S**, but it's been getting a little soft lately. I was really hooked on the **X-Men** for a while. I stopped because I thought what they were doing with "After Xavier" wasn't very cool. I think it was just a sales gimmick.

VANTAGE: ***If you ran the comic industry, and could give yourself any assignment you wanted, who would you draw?***

CARRALERO: I would have to say Wolverine. I love that bad boy.

VANTAGE: ***What does the future hold for you and High Impact Studios?***

For just a couple of guys out of Miami, we didn't know what we were getting into...we heard of local retailers selling out of 300 copies in a day!

China & Jazz ™ & © 1995 High Impact

CARRALERO: We're shooting for the stars! We have a CD-ROM video game in the works with Tantanum, a movie company is talking with us about a **Double Impact** storyline for a movie, and we have toys in the works, hopefully by the beginning of next year. From then on, the sky's the limit!

VANTAGE: ***One last question, what would you say to someone just starting out in self-publishing, or what do you wish someone would've said to you when you were starting out?***

CARRALERO: It's a lot of hard work man! A **lot** of hard work. I've learned that it's one thing to say, "I want to be in the industry and do comic books," and it's completely another thing to sit at the table all day when you have deadlines all over the place, and your editor and publisher calling to see if the book will be out on time.

It is a lot of work and a lot of stress, and it takes a lot of time. My best advice would be for people to take a couple of days and work on an ashcan or something, and see if this is really what you want to do. It's not all-out fame and glamour like some people think. The fame comes along with it, but so does the hard work, the stress, bad news, bad numbers, and all the rest. You have to deal with it all. It's one big package.

On the up side, it's the most incredible feeling to go to a comic book store and see people pick up your book and say, "I like this." It's a beautiful feeling.

THE ONLY SERIOUS FUTURE PICK LIST!

COMIC & CARD PICKS!

VANTAGE™ COMIC & CARD PICKS

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#13

USA $2.95/Canada $3.99

July 1995

FIVE HEROES. THREE LAWS.

AND ONE WORLD THAT DOESN'T KNOW WHETHER TO LOVE THEM...

GEORGE PEREZ 1995

...OR FEAR THEM.

ISAAC ASIMOV'S

I-BOTS™

TEKNO·COMIX

FLIP COVER!